



BILLING CODE: 4910-81-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Maritime Administration

Marine Highway Projects Open Season

AGENCY: Maritime Administration, Department of Transportation

ACTION: Notice of Open Season for Marine Highway Projects

SUMMARY: The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and Maritime Administration (MARAD) announce that the period for Marine Highway project submissions is being extended to December 31, 2018 (Open Season). The purpose of this notice is to extend the invitation to interested organizations to submit Marine Highway project applications to DOT for review and consideration.

DATES: There will be five additional project review periods during the extended Marine Highway Open Season. Table 1 contains the application due dates and review periods for each review period. Qualified projects will be announced shortly after the completion of each review period.

Table 1 - Open Season Project Submission and Review Timeline

Review Session	Project Application Due Date (11:59PM Pacific)	Project Review Period
1	December 31, 2016	January 1, 2017-April 30, 2017
2	June 30, 2017	July 1, 2017-October 31, 2017
3	December 31, 2017	January 1, 2018-April 30, 2018
4	June 30, 2018	July 1, 2017-October 31, 2018
5	December 31, 2018	January 1, 2019-April 30, 2019

KEY INSTRUCTIONS/INFORMATION: The Marine Highway project application process is detailed in 46 CFR Section 393.4 *Marine Highway Projects*, which is accessible online at <https://www.federalregister.gov> search “America’s Marine Highway Program.” Full details on the Open Season were released in the Federal Register on June 2, 2014. (79 FR 31404 pp. 31404 -31405).

MARAD’s Gateway Offices can respond to questions about the Marine Highway Program, Route designations and Project Open Season. Gateway Office contact information is available on the MARAD website at <http://www.marad.dot.gov> search “Office of Gateways.”

ADDRESSES: Submit applications to Fred Jones, Office of Marine Highway and Passenger Services, W21-311, U.S. Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590 or via email to mh@dot.gov. Telephone (202) 366-1123 or Fax (202) 366-5904.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Timothy Pickering, Office of Marine Highway and Passenger Services, W21-312, U.S. Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590. Telephone (202) 366-0704; Fax (202) 366-5904 or email Mr. Pickering at mh@dot.gov. You may also visit MARAD’s Marine Highway webpage at <http://www.marad.dot.gov> search “America’s Marine Highway Program” and select “Final Rule in the Federal Register” for special instructions.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: As originally announced in the Federal Register on June 2, 2014 (79 FR 31404), the scope of the Marine Highway Program has been expanded to include all of the United States domestic marine transportation system. Previously, the Program only included waterways that paralleled landside transportation routes, and thus, excluded routes between the mainland and non-contiguous ports. The expanded scope was specified in Section 405 of The Coast Guard and Marine

Transportation Act of 2012 (Public Law 112-213), which reads: “[t]he Secretary shall designate short sea transportation routes as extensions of the surface transportation system to focus public and private efforts to use the waterways to relieve landside congestion along coastal corridors or to promote short sea transportation.”

The purpose of the open season call for projects is to seek eligible Marine Highway projects that may establish new or enhance existing Marine Highway services. Eligible projects may be designated as Marine Highway Projects by the Secretary of Transportation. Being designated a Marine Highway Project allows DOT resources to be used to assist public project sponsors, ports and other local transportation or economic development agencies in the development of Marine Highway projects.

The Department’s objective through this program is to reduce landside congestion and increase the use of domestic marine transportation by supporting the development of transportation options for shippers. These services provide economic and environmental benefits to the U.S. public at large. Marine Highway Program designated projects can improve safety and system resilience, and serve to reduce transportation-related air emissions, transportation costs for shippers, energy consumption, and costs associated with landside transportation infrastructure.

The Marine Highway Program implementing regulations at 46 CFR Part 393 will be amended to reflect the new statutory changes. In the meantime, DOT/MARAD will accept and process project applications that propose to operate or expand service on Marine Highway routes, including those with no parallel landside route.

Exceptions to this Open Season

If new Marine Highway grant funds are appropriated in a fiscal year (FY), it is possible that the review period for the July 1 – September 30 review session may be truncated so that projects submitted on June 30 could be made eligible to apply for Marine Highway grant funds in that FY.

Participation

Although Marine Highway Projects often involve private entities such as vessel operators, the applications must be sponsored and submitted to DOT/MARAD by a public entity, such as a State Department of Transportation, Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), or Port Authority. Public/private partnerships are encouraged.

To be eligible for Marine Highway Project status, the proposed project must 1) use U.S. documented vessels, 2) transport passengers, containerized freight or trailer-based freight, and 3) operate on a designated Marine Highway Route. (Refer to 46 CFR 393.4(c) for a comprehensive description of project eligibility). However, since the number of navigable waterways eligible for designation as a Marine Highway Route was increased in the Coast Guard and Marine Transportation Act of 2012, DOT/MARAD will consider Marine Highway projects that would operate on newly eligible navigable waterways that have been recommended for, but not yet granted, a Marine Highway Route designation. For further information on recommending that a navigable waterway be designated as a Marine Highway Route, please contact your regional Gateway Office. Their contact information is available on MARAD's website at <http://www.marad.dot.gov> search "Office of Gateway."

(Authority: 49 CFR Sections 1.92 and 1.93)

By Order of the Maritime Administrator:

Date: April 13, 2016

T. Mitchell Hudson, Jr.

Secretary, Maritime Administration

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